

REGULAR MEETING OF THE FITCHBURG SCHOOL COMMITTEE
December 21, 2009

The regular meeting of the Fitchburg School Committee was held at Memorial Middle School on December 21, 2009. Mayor Lisa Wong, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 7:04 pm.

Present

Mayor Lisa Wong, Chairperson
Mr. James Reynolds, Vice-Chairperson
Mr. James Connors
Mr. Glen Capone
Mr. Thomas Rousseau
Mr. Peter Stephens

Absent

Ms. Sally Craigen

Also Present (Administration/Staff)

Mr. Andre Ravenelle, Superintendent Mrs. Dianne Reardon, Recording
Ms. Paula Giaquinto, Assistant Superintendent Secretary
Mr. Robert Jokela, Business Manager
Ms. Sandy Lor, FHS Representative to the School Committee

1. CALL TO ORDER AND SALUTE TO THE FLAG

Mayor Wong opened the meeting and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. PUBLIC TESTIMONY ON AGENDA

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Mr. Rousseau, seconded by Mr. Stephens, to approve the minutes of the Regular School Committee Meeting of December 7, 2009. The motion was approved, unanimously, with a vote of 5-0.

4. REPORTS AND/OR COMMENTS FROM STUDENT/ SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The committee members spoke on the departure of Mr. James Connors as a committee member. They also thanked him for his work on negotiating contracts, and his work on behalf of the children of Fitchburg. Mr. Ravenelle thanked Mr. Connors for his support for him.

Mayor Wong presented Mr. Connors with a gift of a pewter bowl. Mr. Connors thanked the committee for their praise and their good thoughts.

REGULAR MEETING OF THE FITCHBURG SCHOOL COMMITTEE
December 21, 2009

- Building Needs Subcommittee – Sally Cragin
Ms. Cragin was not in attendance and will update on this committee at the next school committee meeting.
- Finance Subcommittee – James Reynolds
Mr. Reynolds reported on the financial item that is on the agenda this evening. This is the warrant that the subcommittee recommends full approval of.
- Negotiations Subcommittee – Mayor Wong
Mayor Wong spoke about ongoing negotiations with various unions. There was some discussion regarding the “Race to the Top” funding, which will be discussed during the Superintendent’s report.
- Policy Subcommittee – Glen Capone
Mr. Capone had nothing to report.
- Strategic Planning Task Force – Thomas Rousseau
Mr. Rousseau reported that there is nothing additional to report. The committee members received an updated report from the Superintendent regarding the progress that the school district is making on these items.
- School Marketing Committee – Sally Cragin
Mayor Wong reported that this committee did meet, but we will wait until the next meeting to get a report from Ms. Cragin.
- Student Report – Sandy Lor
The National Honor Society at FHS sponsored a Jingle Run on Friday, December 18th. There were 140 participants who donated toys and money that was brought to the Fitchburg Police Department for distribution. Mr. Masciarelli and Ms. Lor are working on a survey to get a feel on what is on the student’s minds. She presented a draft of the survey.

5. NEW BUSINESS

6. UNFINISHED BUSINESS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

7. COMMUNICATIONS

8. SUPERINTENDENT’S PRESENTATIONS:

- Recognitions:
Mr. Ravenelle complimented Ms. Lor about the donations of toys from the Jingle Bell run.

REGULAR MEETING OF THE FITCHBURG SCHOOL COMMITTEE
December 21, 2009

He also mentioned that survey monkey could be used for this survey that is being compiled by Ms. Lor and Mr. Masciarelli. He added that students would be able to do this survey at home also.

Mayor Wong and Beth Kaake-Smith mentioned Erika Lawler, a product of the district. She will be playing for the US Women's Hockey Team in the Olympics. Ms. Lawler will be visiting Longsjo Middle School.

Mr. Capone felt that it was appropriate that our newest Olympic athlete from Fitchburg go visit the Longsjo Middle School.

➤ Communication:

- Donation – FHS Basketball Team – Ray Cosenza and Paul DiGeronimo

Mr. Cosenza and Mr. DiGeronimo were available for questions from the committee. Mr. Cosenza said that there is no money to be used from the district and no school time will be missed.

Mr. Capone thanked them for doing this for the students and wished them luck.

Mr. DiGeronimo added that this is a great cause to play for.

Mr. Cosenza added that this is the eleventh year for the Coaches for Cancer tournament in New York. All funds go to Josh Palmer Cancer Research.

- Donation – Books

Mr. Ravenelle acknowledged the donation of books that were delivered today. These were collected and delivered today. There will be a second group delivered in the near future. There are all kinds of books, which are in great shape and this is greatly appreciated. We are about halfway done to catalog our library books in the district online. There is to be interlibrary service in the school district when this is accomplished.

Ms. Lor felt that the donation of books was a great donation as some students cannot afford the price of books.

- Donation – Alternative High School

Mr. Ravenelle spoke on the donation of a holiday dinner to be held on December 22nd, with two seatings scheduled. This was a donation from someone who was in contact with our alternative education program. This has an estimated value of \$1,000.00.

- Donation – Crocker Field

Mr. Ravenelle spoke on the donation of bleachers from Assumption College, valued at \$35,000. These bleachers are in very good condition.

REGULAR MEETING OF THE FITCHBURG SCHOOL COMMITTEE
December 21, 2009

➤ Discussion Items:

• RTTT - Update

Mr. Ravenelle explained that this is a federally funded program. The first tier is that districts will need to apply to the state for funding. Then the state will apply to the government for funding. This will be accomplished through state grants. He explained how school districts will need to vote on a Memorandum of Understanding. He reported on the workshops that have been attended by committee members, administration and members of the Fitchburg Education Association. There is nothing binding about the Memo of Understanding. Mr. Ravenelle explained that the district needs to get their response to the state by January 13th. Then the state needs to get their response to Washington by January 19th. This is the opportunity for discussion regarding this issue. He explained the action item on the agenda.

Mr. Rousseau commented that tonight is just to decide whether we agree to move forward with this Memorandum of Understanding. There is no commitment, yet, if our state is selected, we would be eligible for grant funding. He clarified some of the points of the Memo of Understanding. The members of the FEA would like to sign on to this initiative. Mr. Rousseau asked for questions from the members.

Mayor Wong commented that Massachusetts is ahead of every other state in this funding round. She felt that Fitchburg is getting prepared early for this. She thanked the members and the Superintendent for being diligent about this initiative. This step just places us in the queue. The minimum would be \$300,000. She doesn't see any downside to voting for the MOU.

Mr. Ravenelle spoke on the spreadsheet regarding the Strategic Plan. He also spoke on technological milestones that are being accomplished by the district. He plans to do an update in another few months.

➤ District & School Performance:

• Growth Model Action Plan

Mr. Ravenelle spoke on the growth model action plan. There were presentations at all schools. He thanked the FEA, who had a lot of input on this. The slides have worked very well for explaining the link between achievement and growth. There have been actions taken based on this information. Also, there have been proven gains by students that partake in the 21st Century Program.

9. ACTION ITEMS:

- #09-01 #09-10 A motion was made by Mr. Connors, seconded by Mr. Rousseau, to approve the Superintendent's recommendation to accept the donation of used library books to FPS, estimated value of \$5,000 from Deb Huber and Reading Tree. The motion was passed, unanimously, with a vote of 5-0.

REGULAR MEETING OF THE FITCHBURG SCHOOL COMMITTEE
December 21, 2009

- #09-02 #09-10 A motion was made by Mr. Connors, seconded by Mr. Rousseau, to approve the Superintendent's recommendation to accept the donation of \$1,000 to the Alternative High School for the student holiday dinner from an anonymous donor. The motion was passed, unanimously, with a vote of 5-0.
- #09-03 #09-10 A motion was made by Mr. Connors, seconded by Mr. Rousseau, to approve the Superintendent's recommendation to accept the donation of portable bleachers, to be used for the visitor's bleachers, at Crocker Field, estimated value of \$35,000 from Assumption College. The motion was passed, unanimously, with a vote of 5-0.
- #09-04 #09-10 A motion was made by Mr. Capone, seconded by Mr. Rousseau, to approve the Superintendent's recommendation to allow (final approval) the Fitchburg High School basketball team to participate in the annual tournament in Elmyra, New York, from December 27-29, 2009. The motion was passed, unanimously, with a vote of 5-0.
- #09-05 #09-10 A motion was made by Mr. Capone, seconded by Mr. Connors, to approve the Superintendent's recommendation to accept the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the Race to the Top (RTTT) proposal. The motion was passed, unanimously, with a vote of 5-0.
- Mr. Reynolds asked if the committee will be informed regarding progress of this initiative.
- Ms. Kaake-Smith added that the FEA saw no reason not to move forward, however, would like more information prior to the January 4, 2010 meeting.
- #09-06 #09-10 A motion was made by Mr. Capone, seconded by Mr. Connors, to approve the Superintendent's recommendation to approve the warrant #WG10025 in the amount of \$511,473.20 (dead). The motion was passed, unanimously, with a vote of 5-0.

10. EXECUTIVE SESSION

11. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Mr. Connors, seconded by Mr. Capone, to adjourn the meeting at 7:52 pm. The motion was passed, unanimously, with a vote of 5-0.

Respectfully submitted by,

André Ravenelle
Secretary to the School Committee, and
Superintendent of Schools

AR/dmr